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"Major cold: streams and marshes frozen solid"

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THE ILLAWARRA AND BEYOND

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{CALENDAR}

December 2012
MTWTFSS

Beautiful sunny days continued into this pentad with the highest maximum reaching 20.8°C on Sunday August 5th. The highest overnight minimum was 11.5°C. No rainfall was recorded during this period and humidity remained low (between 30% and 62%). Far from 'streams and marshes frozen solid', feelings of cold melted away when one basked in the warm sun. My birthday is amongst these last days of winter.

The first half of my life (so far) was spent in the northern hemisphere when my birthday was at the height of summer. When I attended boarding school in Britain, friends whose birthdays fell during term might elect to hold parties at school. Cakes, crisps, and other various treats could be ordered from the school's kitchen. Until the school decided that allowing young teenagers access to alcoholic beverage might be unwise, cider was also on the menu. My birthday was always in the summer holidays.

Many cultures mark the birth of a child. But when infant mortality was much higher, it was customary to celebrate the event a little while into the baby's life. In Chinese culture, a 'full moon/ month' banquet (滿月酒) is often held when families, relatives and friends gather to welcome the new addition. Similarly, Korean culture marks the 100th day of a child's life.

Other markers in life include the 'coming of age' which acknowledges a young person's transition into adulthood such as the Jewish *bar mitzvah* at 13. The age of majority in most

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countries is 18 with some legal rights and responsibilities granted incrementally from the ages of 15 to 21. In Japan, a person reaches adulthood at 20 and official ceremonies (Seijin Shiki) are held for the year's new adults on the second Monday of January, a national holiday. After reaching adulthood, 'decade birthdays' are conventional milestones. The Chinese 12 astrological signs in a cycle matching the 5 elements makes the 10th year the most significant. Citizens in the Queen Elizabeth II's realm and the United Kingdom overseas territories may apply for a congratulatory card from the monarch reaching 100 years of age. (At 105, the centenarian will receive a royal birthday card every year thereafter.)

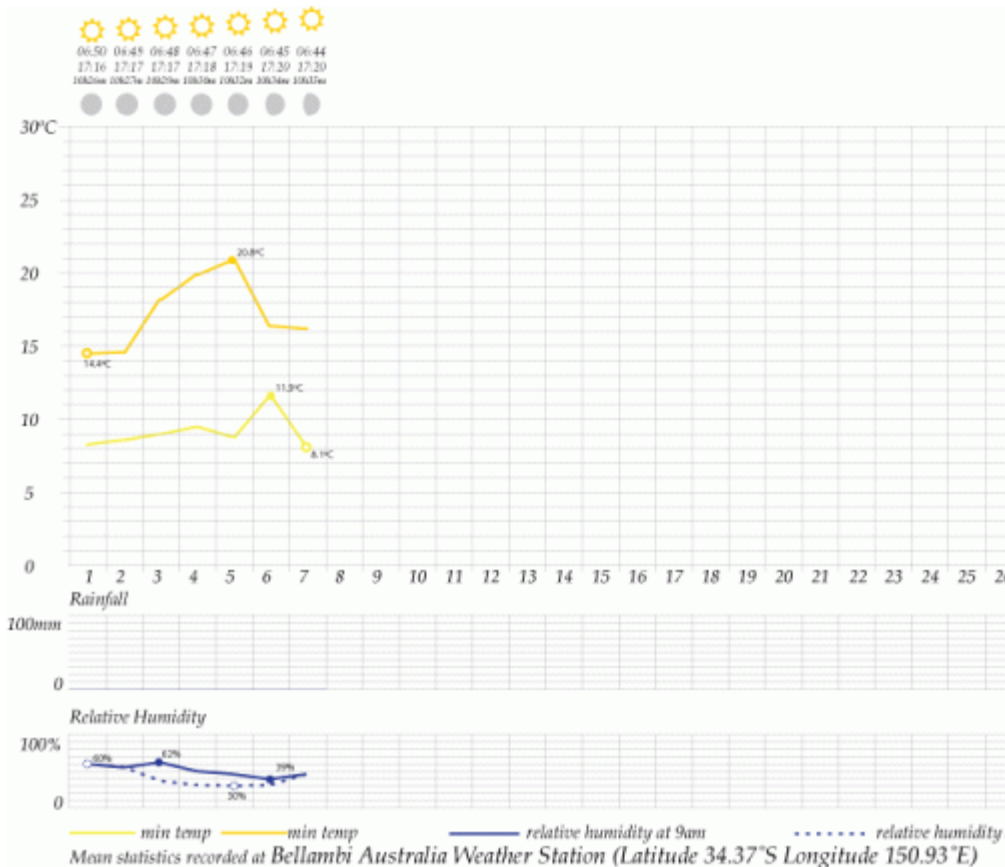
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The 'oldest' birthday party I have been to is my grandfather's 90th when he put on a festive banquet. Families and friends travelled from near and far to help him mark the occasion. Now into his 9th decade, he is half-way into his second Chinese astrological cycle. If Hong Kong was still an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, he could apply for a congratulatory note in 7 years time.

[Solar Terms Calendar](#)

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{SNIPPETS}



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4 RESPONSES TO “MAJOR COLD: STREAMS AND MARSHES FROZEN

{NOTABLE COMMENTARIES}

Louise Curham
 August 12th, 2012 at 23:22

IllusAlmanac ¹ Illustrated
 Almanac

We talked about Niuean boys getting their first hair cut – I thought it was about age 9 but it’s actually when they become teenagers – check this out <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/niueans/1/6> My sister-in-law Fiona worked as a GP on Niue for quite a while when she first qualified, it seemed a life changing experience for her.

On the topic of zero birthdays, I’ve been to three 80ths this year – my dad’s 80th and one for Keith’s dad Doug just recently. It felt a real honour to be invited to the 80th of someone who is not a relative and it was fantastic – Doug lives in El Arish in Far North Queensland in the middle of the sugar cane farmers about 20 minutes from the most beautiful coast. All kinds of people live up there because of the migration to work on the cane fields over the past century really though mostly post-war. I didn’t expect North Queensland to be so multicultural after a fashion. Doug has a friend who plays the bagpipes, that was sensational! The guests aged under 4 couldn’t believe their ears and eyes. My dad’s 80th was hilarious, we (my brothers and I) are not natural event managers however my stepmother definitely is. We tried to organise the event on his actual b day – it ended up with him asking about 10 in the morning ‘so what exactly is the plan?’ (still there was champagne and winning 8 hearts at five hundred and a lot of effort from the various parties and a big big lunch). The Easter event was enough too, a combined 80th and wedding anniversary) – we received the event beforehand, literally and some of the speakers actually stuck to it – quite surreal for those of us who knew what the script said. My slot for the birthday speech was not pre-scripted and I had a ball – it really struck me very powerfully what an incredible century these people have lived through, especially in a room with all these step-grand children who just possibly imagine what the world was like for 5 year old Tom Curham in 1937. Anyway, if anyone asks you to their 80th, say yes, especially if it’s not family! It is really something.

Louise Curham

August 12th, 2012 at 23:23

Mistake above, I meant to say all these step grandchildren who just can’t possibly ...

Mike

August 13th, 2012 at 12:28

I returned from a European trip just recently. The timing for this was my mother’s 90th birthday. She is in remarkably good health, which surprises no one as she has been a member of The Women’s League of Health and Beauty for a good sixty years. (The League was set up in the 1930s in England and is also regarded as important in the emancipation movement.) Her sight has never been good but now her previously acute hearing is deteriorating. For this reason she chooses to live by herself, as having other people around means the space becomes less ‘certain’ for her to navigate using memory rather than detection. For this birthday, the family bought her a large screen television, as it improves her ability to follow the movement of the ball during tennis, a long standing obsession, and cricket, a more recent engagement. She has many friends and family, often receiving them on a seat in the gardens she shares with the other flat dwellers, south of London.

Jo Law

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August 16th, 2012 at 21:30

It's nice to hear about these grand birthday parties going on around the globe. My father will turn 80 in 2 years time and my mother has big plans, which I am sure he wouldn't approve. With an idiosyncratic sense of humour and a liking for making things up, he once said to be (seemingly seriously) that one's life expectancy is the sum of one's mother's age plus one's father's age divided by 2. Anything beyond that is a bonus.

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